



# Pontifical Mission Library-Bethlehem Summer Camp Newsletter 2015

The color of the Palestinian flag is reflected through the T-shirts of three different groups.

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## Special points of interest:

- \* Seventy-eight (78) campers, both children and youth with age ranges from 6 to 19 years old have attended the 6-week stretch summer camp.
- \* Around twenty-six (26) participants joined the 3-week long summer camp intended for the youth which kicked-off on the 1st of June until the 19th. The second group, where a total of fifty-two (52) children participated, started on the 22nd of June and ended on the 10th of July.

## PML-Bethlehem Summer Camp 2015 focuses on Palestinian Heritage...

### The joy of knowing and discovering one's heritage

Every day was a discovery, a learning process, a growth-provoking and enriching encounter, an enjoyable experience of working together, and glimpsing the past with the curious gaze of the present while having fun at the maximum level in knowing and appreciating more their Palestinian culture and heritage. This was the over-all atmosphere which reigned and remained visible during the six-week stretch summer camp attended by seventy-eight (78) campers, both children and youth with age ranges from 6 to 19 years old. There were no lull moments for them from the very

first day of the camp as energies were evidently kept high until the end. With relentless energy and interest, the campers which were divided into three different groups were as happy and contented as their parents as well as the director and staff of the Pontifical Mission Library. Each group had specific schedule to follow based on their levels of age, interest and needs. All the activities were geared toward going deeper into their heritage which is akin to identifying their being Palestinians.

The spacious park of Marie Doty, our venue, with its seemingly green-carpeted grass and towering-shaded

trees as well as its tranquil atmosphere - free from the hustle and bustle of the traffic and city life where campers had ran and played freely and safely was an additional positive factor. Likewise, it had contributed a lot to all the learning experiences which had transpired during the course of the camp. Notwithstanding the on-going classes of some schools, organized summer camps by the different schools and institutions and the Ramadan period when we started the camp on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June until the 10<sup>th</sup> of July, the summer encounter was again a great success.



This year's theme, 'Our heritage...our identity' gave the participants both Christians and Muslims alike the great opportunity to discover and know more their rich and diverse culture that shaped their identity as Palestinian people. The well-planned activities had introduced them to a deeper knowledge of their history and of various traditional Palestinian lifestyles and folklores. In depth learning and rich information of their traditional games, type of



arts and architecture, values ad-hered, stories of old, handicrafts and embroidery styles, pottery and ceramics designs, olive wood carvings, traditional folk dances, variety of costumes/dresses, music, legendary cuisine with a wide variety of local delicacies were presented also through lectures, sessions, trips and visits, thus, made them familiar and felt proud of their very own heritage. Having gone through these various activities which each day of

ferred was like going back to the well-spring and richness of their Palestinian identity where they got a 'taste and see' of their so-



**Children and youth participants learned more about their rich and diverse culture that shaped their identity as Palestinian.**



cial way of life, values, traditions and mores, and even treading on their religious, historical and archaeological sites. The participants of each group had really maximized each of their 3-week long encounters of learning and being together. Furthermore, it was very enriching that they felt privilege having this kind of camp for theirs was not just an ordinary camp of merely having games and trips but more of living and experiencing palpably the im-

portant part of life in Palestine through daily concrete activities. Moreover, they were not just made aware of the significance of their cultural heritage but having seen, visited, touched, tasted and heard about it, have made them resolved to keep alive their rich culture and heritage. As a matter of fact, many have expressed the desire to help in its preservation and be an instrument to boost the historical knowledge, community pride and tourism to the other young ones of their age.

## Valuable experiences of each group

These varied activities enhanced the participants' identity....

**The Youth Group** (from 7th to 11th Grades) **and the First and Second Groups** (1st to 6th Grades)

Since Palestinian heritage was the highlight in this year's summer camp, quite a number of young people got interested and attracted into it that they registered themselves as early as May and even before the academic year has ended. Around twenty-six (26) participants joined the 3-week long summer camp intend

ed for the youth which kicked-off on the 1st of June until the 19th. The second group, where a total of fifty-two (52) children participated, started on the 22nd of June and ended on the 10th of July.



The objective of the different activities was for the participants to get useful information about their culture and heritage through the sessions/lectures, games, contests, trips/visits which reflected their lifestyles, folklores and values. The other activities such as the storytelling, needlework, arts, drawing and illustrations, folklore singing and dancing (dabkeh), etc. had greatly helped them to value and acknowledge more their importance in the life of every Palestinian. As expressed by Sam el-Yateem, a youth participant, , *'... the camp was very educative and informative. It helped me to know more about my heritage through our visits and trips to some of our historical and religious places.'* This was affirmed also by another youth participant, Malak Odeh who said, *'...the sessions/activities had helped us to know more about our heritage sites, the modern Palestinian writers*

*and other more interesting information that we got from it.'* Except for a whole day trip or visit, the three activities in each day were more than enough to keep them busy and enjoy their time of learning and being with one another. As Sarah Ghabboun of the youth group said, *'...we learned more about our Palestinian traditions as well as the history of the places where we went for a trip/visit...We did enjoy our time and made lots of new friends too.'* True enough, the participants got a lot of information about their traditions and how they have acquired their lifestyles and folklores which eventually made them understand more their way of behaving, acting, thinking, etc.



In addition, they affirmed the fact that they learned a lot of things by doing. Old campers, Sally and Francis Habash, both respectively said, '*...the camp was so interesting and I learned a lot of things from it. I learned more about us as Palestinians, our lived traditions, and how to preserve our heritage, etc. Likewise, I became more familiar of the life of the Palestinians before, especially the Bedouins. We visited places that I never knew before. And basically, I*

*enjoyed each activity, more so the drawing and illustration, needlework and embroidery and the dabkeh for I have improved a lot along these as-*



*pects as my creative and psychomotor skills were harnessed.'* 'I enjoyed all the activities that we have had in the camp especially the session on generosity and hospitality. I learned more about the Palestinians' ways of living before, the traditions and values they uphold and a lot more of new things that I am so grateful to know. Like the other old campers, George Hazboun also appreciated the idea of the camp which focused on their heritage. He said, '*... it helped me to start know-*

*ing and understanding more about my identity, and being able to see the difference between the way of life before and the present days' ways of living'. The inputs given by our invited professional guests and experts like Dr. Qustandi Shomali, a BU professor who specializes on Palestinian history and Arabic literature; Dr. Nidal Jeries, a pharmacist by profession and works as an official tour guide in Bethlehem; and Ms.*

Mays Salsa, who works at the Palestinian Cultural Heritage and Preservation Center, had proven to be very enriching and interesting as well and had motivated them a lot to explore more on this topic.



**Invited professional speakers shared extensive and valuable information about Palestinian culture and heritage...**

Based on the vast knowledge and the information they had shared to this group of children and youth, the participants couldn't help but be grateful and proud of their being a Palestinian and for having a diverse and rich heritage at that.



This was confirmed by Daren Odeh, one of the participants who said, '*I really gained a lot and was enlightened by the information*



given to us about our heritage during the sessions, trips and visits to museums, heritage places such as the village in Battir, monastery in Ortas, the Greek/Russian Orthodox churches in Al-Khader and Hebron, Solomon Pools, the Nativity church, Shepherd's Field, etc. At the end of the day, both children and youth participants would always had some stories to tell and share to their parents - something special that they learned from the session or from the day's activity. A good example



of this was the mother of Joseph and Matthew Mourra who commented, *'When we were passing by the Star Street, my son Joseph started giving me information about the things they have seen and learned when they did the walking trails of the Old city of Bethlehem, wherein they got to know more its historic quarters and its ancient treasures. I was very surprised for it was something new for me.'* So, at times, some parents got surprised with the information that their kids received during the course of the camp and they also got updated by them regarding their culture and heritage. Furthermore, the youth encounter with the elderly folks in Antoniana Society, which was a lively exchange between the two generations as they glanced, compared and pointed out the differences

The various visits and trips had encouraged the participants to discover more their heritage places with much interest. And they made the resolve to help in its preservation and be an instrument to boost the historical knowledge, community pride and tourism to the other young ones of their age.



in terms of the simplicity of life before with the high-technology laden present time was very enriching indeed. It was only in the camp that both children and youth have delightedly played some of the Palestinian traditional games, got familiarized and heard some old words, proverbs used by the elderly folks and stories of the olden times. In fact, both boys and girls showed eagerness and spent valuable time to be able to finish their newly-acquired skills and awakened-interest towards embroi-

dery as well as in learning and mastering some difficult steps of their traditional dance (dabkeh), which somehow made them forget the use of social media and other information technology gadgets once at home.



Roula Bandak, one of the mothers said, *'My daughters wouldn't leave their needlework for many hours until they were done with it.'* Francis Sleibi, a father of two participants, was surprised and noticed the change of interest of his two sons, also said, *'On weekends, no one had bothered to play on the computer, iPad and even on their*

*cell phones but instead they've tried to finish the embroidery pieces and played some traditional games which they learned during the days of the camp.'*

**There were no lull moments in the camp, as participants got involved in every activities with relentless energies. They tried the following: played the traditional games, engaged in embroidery, learned basic steps of Dabkeh, etc.**



On one hand, while it is true that the children or the young generation nowadays are caught up with the new modern technology which encourages anti-social attitudes, but at least, the participants of this camp learned some of the traditional Palestinian games which facilitated positive interactions among them as they were done in a relaxing and enjoyable atmosphere. To quote another parent, Abeer Habash, *'My kids played at home the games they have learned in the camp, have even introduced them to their siblings which made them forget for a while their computer games.'* Mariam Jarayseh-Sleibi, one of the local staff made this observation, *'It was a very good idea to get them to play the traditional games of long ago like Ostoghmayya, Lams el hadaf, etc. for they learned to*



*play in groups and did communicate to each other. No one felt isolated since they gave time to be with one another, enjoyed each other's company and learned to socialize more with the rest of the group...* On the other hand, the **A to Z** or ('alif to ya) as well as the **Old-word scramble** contest and game, had reinforced and deepened the participants' knowledge of their Palestinian heritage. In the former, they were made to think of any word which may start with any letter of the Arabic alphabet to describe any object - i.e. old tools, handcraft, etc. of the past which was commonly used by the old people before. In the latter game, however, the participants were asked to re-arrange letters that were given to them to form words that match the description and the pictures of old tools/objects.

Both were done in two groups to encourage teamwork, quick thinking as well as positive competitiveness spirit among them and of which they really had fun. The participants were more than challenged to recall the words used by their grandparents as the majority were not familiar with them. The aim to introduce, be familiar with the words and let them learn how these different objects were called be-

fore were successfully attained as many of them expressed their interest to revive the use of these words even in their normal conversation.

**Participants, both Christians and Muslims alike had learned to work in a team and at the same time experienced the true spirit of sharing as lived by the people of long ago...**



gadgets for a while and focused their energies into discovering, learning and deepening more about their very own culture and heritage which they found worth-knowing and worth-spending their time.



Definitely, all these varied activities that we have had during the camp snatched and distracted these group of young people from using their electronic





**Impressions...**

**Feedback... Insights...**

*“The camp was very nice with its varied activities. I gained a lot of information about my heritage especially during the different sessions and workshops we have attended. We got familiarized with some proverbs which we even tried to use in our conversations. We had the chance also to visit and tread on some of the religious and archaeological places considered as our Palestinian heritage.”*

*Dareen Odeh (Youth Group)*

*“I learned a lot from the camp. We were introduced to the kind of games they used to play before in the past and we got to know more about Bethlehem and its heritage through walking trails and organized trips.”*

**Tamara Bandak (Second Group)**

*“I'm happy to have participated in this camp as all the activities were focused on our Palestinian heritage and culture. I'm grateful that I received a lot of information about it.”*

*Noor Abu-Khaleed (Youth Group)*

*“I enjoyed this summer camp very much because I learned to do things on my own especially during the art session.”*

**Joseph Abu Saad (First Group)**

*“The camp was really good. Aside from the Dabkeh session where I have improved a lot my skills in dancing, I liked most the A-Z contest because I learned a lot of new words that were used before by the elderly people, but not being used that much now-a-days by the young ones.”*

**Lina Mansour (Youth Group)**

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## Continuation ...



*"I have seen so many new things and learned so much from the activities, such as: cross-stitch, swimming, walking trip, dabkeh, etc. and had some fun at the same time."*

**Lara Bandak (Second Group)**

*"The camp taught us so many things which helped me at least improved my skills on the following: embroidery, drawing and illustration, dabkeh and it allowed me to know more about our cultural heritage..."*

*Luna Habash (Second Group)*

*"I was so happy to have my son registered in this camp for he would always wake up early in order to be there before the start of the day's activity. He was making a big sacrifice because he was fasting at the same time. Surely, he will participate again in the summer camp next year."*

*Mother of Husam Issa (First Group)*

*"I liked everything in the camp...the drawing, the embroidery sessions, the Shesh-besh and other traditional games, values formation sessions, etc. Also, I learned many things about our cultural heritage, the other religions and how to respect the others whose culture and beliefs are different from ours."*

**Farah Abu-Teer (Second Group)**

*"Having walked along the valleys and hills with my friends just like what we did on our way to Battir was an unforgettable experience for me."*

*Sally Habash (Youth Group)*

*"It was fun to be in the camp for we learned to play some of the old and traditional Palestinian games and was able to play with the other children. I liked the session on Palestinian values and folklore especially about the way of life of the people in the past, maybe during our grandparent's time. And, how I wish that we all could live the way they lived before."*

**Lianne Anostas (First Group)**

## Continuation ...

*"I had splendid time in the camp and simply liked the activities that they have organized for us. Since, I am more inclined towards handicrafts, so, I enjoyed most of all the drawing and embroidery sessions..."*

*Zeina Abu-Teer (Second Group)*

*"We had so much fun in the camp. So far, I learned so many things such as: drawing techniques, playing Shesh-besh which is practically new to me, learning lots of old words that we as young people are not familiar with, etc."*

*Despena Bazazo ( Second Group)*

*"The activities of the camp had really drawn kids' interest to be actively involved in everything. I liked the way you (the staff) have treated each one and how you took care of them. Every time my son would come back home he would always have some stories to tell me and to share to his younger sister."*

*Mother of Zien Ghattas (First Group)*

*"There were so many things that I learned and enjoyed doing in the camp. For example, I learned the basic steps of Dabkeh, have tried singing and playing respectively our Palestinian traditional songs and games, etc. But, most of all I liked the theme of the camp as it was very relevant for us, also the way they developed the topic and planned the schedule..."*

*George Zoughbi (Second Group)*

*"I got to know more about our customs and traditions as well as so many old words and names of objects that were used in the past for different purposes which are part of our cultural heritage."*

*Basel Abu-Teer (Second Group)*

*"It was great to be in this summer camp! I loved all the various and wonderful activities we have had, such as: the folk-lore dance and songs, trips, art sessions, traditional Palestinian games, sessions on Palestinian values, etc. This experience had really increased my knowledge about our Palestinian culture and heritage."*

*Mike Sleibi (First Group)*

*It was a lot of fun during the camp. In general, we enjoyed swimming, drawing and visiting the heritage places. Likewise, we have learned new skills especially in learning Dabkeh and embroidery..."*

*Nicola and George Abu-Saed (Second Group)*

## Continuation...

"I made a lot of new friends in the camp which I am so happy about. We have lived the spirit of sharing and cooperation that we became so spontaneous and free in the way we dealt with one another..."

Ayat Abu-Niemeh (Youth Group)

*"First of all, I liked the venue of the camp for we felt so free to move around. I think I have improved my skills in drawing, cross-stitch as well as in dancing the Dabkeh."*

*Angela Salem (Second Group)*

"The staff and the facilitators were very nice to us, that I liked the camp very much. We had so much fun in learning Dabkeh, embroidery and have developed the love and appreciation of our own heritage."

Jood Khalifa (Second Group)

*"The activities were very interesting which made us awake all the time during the day. We were very much entertained in figuring out the meaning of the old words that the staff gave us during the A-Z contest."*

*Stavrola Bazaya (Second Group)*

**"Thank you very much for your effort because we don't have the time and enough knowledge to teach our kids about our valuable heritage...and really, we are learning too from them..."**

**Bernadette Mourra (Parent)**

"The summer camp was really great! What interested me most were the formation sessions on hospitality, family and the way of life of the people in the past because I learned so many things about my Palestinian heritage. I also enjoyed the walking trails and the educational trips that we did for we received a lot of information about Bethlehem and Palestine. Next year, I will join the summer camp again."

Leya Bandak (First Group)

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS!!!

*We express our deepest gratitude and appreciation  
to ALL,  
whose continued support, precious time & dedication,  
professional expertise and skills,  
commitment in forming the young,  
loving presence and responsible cooperation  
had contributed a lot  
to the  
camp's success.*

*Without YOU, we could not have made it!*

*MAAY THANKS!!!*

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We're on



Pontifical Mission  
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مكتبة البعثة البابوية بيت لحم



**"Our Heritage...Our Identity"**



**A nation's culture  
resides in the hearts and in  
the soul of its people.**

- Mahatma Ghandi -



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